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FM AMEMBASSY RANGOON
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8197
INFO RUCNASE/ASEAN MEMBER COLLECTIVE
RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA 1539
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 2051
RUEHKA/AMEMBASSY DHAKA 4999
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI 5026
RUEHUL/AMEMBASSY SEOUL 8621
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 6190
RUEHCN/AMCONSUL CHENGDU 1592
RUEHCHI/AMCONSUL CHIANG MAI 1853
RUEHCI/AMCONSUL KOLKATA 0443
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC
RUEATRS/DEPT OF TREASURY WASHDC
RUEKJCS/DIA WASHDC
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 4046
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC
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RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 2011
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 RANGOON 000751

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR EAP/MLS, DRL, AND IO
PACOM FOR FPA

E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/24/2018

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [BM](#)

SUBJECT: BURMA: USING DRL FUNDS FOR ELECTIONS CONFERENCE

REF: A. STATE 27846

[1](#)B. STATE 46527

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Classified By: Economic Officer Samantha A. Carl-Yoder for Reasons 1.4
(b and d)

Summary

[1](#)1. (C) This is an action request. Please see para 7. The Hsia Pen Media Group, a past recipient of Embassy Rangoon small grants funding, plans to host a conference for approximately 130 Shan and Kachin youth, November 20-24, 2008, in Northern Shan State. During the conference, participants will discuss the upcoming 2010 elections, the role of youth in the upcoming election, and how to participate in political dialogue. The organizers are adept at staying below the political radar in Burma and have plans in place to stay off-screen with this event. Embassy Rangoon requests DRL concurrence to fund this worthwhile project using the remaining USD 23,000 in DRL Burma Special Fund monies. End Summary.

Educating Youth on Elections

[1](#)2. (C) Burma's fractured pro-democracy opposition continues to grapple with addressing the regime's upcoming 2010 elections. We expect the regime to continue to monitor, harass, and arrest well-known political activists as the elections draw nearer. The Hsia Pen Media Group, a former Embassy Rangoon small grantee that works under the regime's radar, has outlined a plan to host a youth conference in Shan State, targeted at educating youth about their role in the upcoming elections. The group has held three similar workshops in the past without government interference. Program information (as provided by the organization) follows.

13. (C) Project objective: To educate Shan and Kachin youth about the upcoming 2010 elections and promote dialogue concerning whether groups should form political parties to contest the elections. A five-day conference will engage active individuals interested in promoting change in Burma, in discussions on how elections should function, the potential role of Burma's youth, and the advantages and disadvantages of political participation. The project will encourage participants to employ critical thinking and reasoning techniques, as well as foster an improved understanding of the elections process.

14. (C) Project Outline: Hsia Pen Media Group will select 130 youth from Northern, Eastern, and Southern Shan State, as well as from Kachin State, who have been engaging in community development and political and social affairs to participate in a five-day conference. Participants will discuss general topics, such as:

- The role of youth in Burma;
- The role and responsibilities of youth in elections;
- The advantages and disadvantages of participating in and contesting the election;
- Whether to form political parties; and
- How to establish plans of action for the elections.

Several participants will be asked to prepare and present papers on these topics. Additionally, participants will host smaller-break out sessions, where they can discuss the application of these themes to their regions.

15. (C) Budget: Overall cost of the program is USD 22,466.

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Budget breakdown follows:

Project Costs, in USD	
Description	Amount
-Honorarium for 3 organizers, 5 facilitators, and 1 financial manager	1,100
-Travel Allowance	14,291
-5 facilitators, 3 organizers, 1 Financial manager	
-4 participants from Rangoon	
-4 participants from Mandalay	
-20 participants from Kachin State	
-40 participants from Northern Shan State	
-32 participants from Eastern Shan State	
-28 participants from Southern Shan State	
-Organizational Costs	723
-Food Costs	3,151
-Accommodation Costs	2,740
-Stationary Costs	354
-Generator Rental and Fuel costs	58
-Hall Rental	50
Total Cost	22,466

Embassy Rangoon will forward the full grant proposal to DRL separately for review.

16. (C) Given recent arrests and ongoing harassment of political activists, Embassy Rangoon's Small Grants Committee considered whether this program would create safety problems for Hsia Pen Media Group and conference participants. The Committee concluded this conference is low-risk. The Hsia Pen Media Group is an organization recognized as an independent Shan media group, not a political party. Since 2006, the group, with U.S. funding, successfully hosted three workshops in Shan State focused on capacity building and political activism. Its most recent program was in June

¶2008. Given Shan State's isolation, the group has not experienced any government intervention. Additionally, Hsia Pen Media Group will hold the conference in Special Region 3, Northern Shan State, a location controlled by the Shan State Army rather than the Burmese Army. Also, the conference will take place during the Shan New Year, when many Shan people will travel to the state from other parts of the country, so the movements of conference participants should not appear unusual.

Action Request

7 (SBU) Embassy Rangoon's Small Grants Committee has reviewed and approved this project. Given that the project fosters networks, linkages, and political activism among emerging leaders in the key Shan and Kachin constituencies, while also promoting awareness of the elections process in an environment that is not likely to attract GOB notice, Embassy Rangoon seeks DRL's concurrence to use the remaining USD 23,000 of DRL Burma Special Response Fund monies (Refs A and B) to fund this initiative. Embassy Rangoon personnel will monitor and evaluate this project, sending DRL a full report on the results, per Refs A and B. Post appreciates DRL and the Department's continued support of projects to promote democracy and human rights within Burma.

DINGER